

Newark

N. J. DOCUMENTS
NEWARK LIBRARY

This is the second in a series of interpretive studies which we are pleased to share with you.

WILLIAM R. WARD, M.D.
President, Y. M. C. A.

CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM

To the Board of Directors of the
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION of NEWARK

Subject:

msc

THE NEWARK INTERRACIAL SITUATION

A FEW FACTS:

More than 46,000 Negroes lived in Newark at the outbreak of the war. The present population is close to 50,000. In 1910 there were only 9,475 Negroes. In 30 years this number increased more than 500 per cent.

The most recent figures show that 10.2 per cent of Newark's industrial workers are Negroes. Ten years ago only 3.6 per cent were Negroes.

Approximately 4,000 Negroes, including 800 boys under 18 years, have migrated to Newark since 1941, according to the Housing Authority of the City of Newark. Sixty per cent of these came from Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. During the ensuing years the housing vacancy rate was as low as .6 per cent, six vacancies out of every 1,000 homes, with rooms for young men at a premium. Poor housing increases health hazards and anti-social evils resulting in high mortality and increased juvenile delinquency.

The Court Street Branch of the Y.M.C.A. does not have a single dormitory room to offer these young men and boys as a "home away from home."

HEALTH AND EDUCATION:

The Board of Education is developing a training program of good will and understanding and a faculty committee is preparing a curriculum in this field which will be used in the regular course of study in all the schools.

Health and welfare agencies through cooperation have brought the Newark Negro death rate down nearly five persons per thousand during the past 10 years. Yet the yearly death rate is still three persons per thousand over the general death rate.

During 1944 a total of 119 of the nearly 50,000 Negroes in Newark died of pneumonia and tuberculosis while only 135 out of the more than 400,000 persons comprising Newark's white population succumbed to the same diseases.

In the same year more than twice as many Negro babies under the age of two, than white babies in the same age group, died of infant diseases.

The Negroes of Newark contributed approximately 6,000 men to the armed services during World War II. The Court Street Branch of the Y.M.C.A. has 175 names on its honor roll with two gold stars. Many of these men are already returning to Newark in search of counsel, guidance, and physical reconditioning.

TENSION IN NEWARK:

New York, Detroit, Beaumont and many other cities have experienced outbreaks that have caused millions of dollars worth of damage and untold destruction in morale. As recently as September of 1945 Negro and white pupils in a New York City high school engaged in brawls and vandalism and lawlessness flared at block parties.

Tension exists in Newark like it does in nearly every other industrial city in America. But there are reasons to believe that it is under control. Lack of proper recreation facilities is as potent a breeder of tensions as poor housing, overcrowding and employment problems.

Newark has experienced only minor racial outbreaks. Each is reported to have been precipitated by an argument between Negro and white school-age boys with too much unsupervised or unguided idle time. Proper, supervised recreation would help prevent these occurrences.

Heavily populated Negro communities need a center for wholesome community life. An adequately equipped and staffed Y.M.C.A. would serve this need.

Negro leaders in Newark are perhaps more united than in these other communities, and counsel with each other. And white and Negro leaders here are reaching a better understanding.

SOME WAYS THAT WILL HELP NEWARK MEET ITS INTERRACIAL SITUATION:

Negroes and whites must work together to meet community needs. Housing, health, recreation facilities and employment in

the post-war period illustrate what must be done together. They must work not as Negroes and whites but as citizens.

Leaders of one race must become acquainted with leaders of the other race and know them as persons--as friends. Neither group now fully appreciates the high qualities of the other group.

Despite interracial tensions, brought on largely by wartime conditions, forward strides have been made in industrial communities by organizations such as the Urban League, the Y.W.C.A. and the Y.M.C.A., toward a better relationship between the two races, and the value of recreation has taken on a deeper significance.

Providing clean, wholesome recreation, craft projects, and a "place to go" for its Negro youth are responsibilities of the community. These are the basic needs which the citizens of Newark must provide.

Given these tools, the Y.M.C.A. with its wealth of experience, can help build a new generation geared to live and carry on in the new era of peace that lies ahead. Such an organization can then teach good citizenship and help boys and young men grow in moral and spiritual understanding. And thus it will be possible to unify the efforts of leaders of both races to help Newark avoid the racial disasters which have plagued other communities.

How to promote better interracial feeling as set forth by the New York Times, editorially; "Big riots are always preceded by little ones, little riots by chronic squabbling and friction. And all of them come out of attitudes which in the beginning may not be violent at all. We must each remember that there are no degrees of citizenship in this country. We can find our friends and our associates where we like. But we can't deny to anyone a civic right we claim for ourselves. If the civic rights are cheerfully granted, if equality of opportunity is generally recognized, if we measure our fellows by character and ability, if we refuse to be badgered into suspecting or disliking whole groups of people for no reason or for foolish reasons, we will be doing our loyal part to help our country. This is a job we can work at every day. If we work at it faithfully enough, there won't be any race riots."

HOW THE Y.M.C.A. CAN HELP:

The Court Street building which has been in use 14 years for the Y.M.C.A. program was constructed in 1891, nearly 55 years ago, as a settlement house and long ago outlived its usefulness as a structure to adequately cope with the needs of the

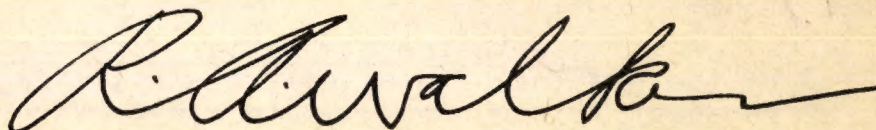
community.

However, despite its inadequacy, the Court Street branch has carried on and has done an outstanding job. Institutions like the Court Street branch of the Y.M.C.A. are reasons the costly riots such as those of New York and Detroit have not occurred in Newark.

The trend toward informal recreational activities is likely to be accelerated in the postwar years. Men released from the armed forces will demand recreation without regimentation. The present generation is accustomed to a variety of activities. With the present inadequate physical set-up at the Y.M.C.A., the organization is limited in its activities and thus, unless facilities are improved, young people will go elsewhere--and not often to the most wholesome places--in search of an outlet.

The Y.M.C.A. in its service to youth of all races, religions and nationalities, stands in a strategic position to foster better understanding and cooperation. It must not only be alive to the situation, but must have adequate physical facilities to provide a comprehensive program of guidance and recreation. Up-to-date facilities must be made available to the youth of all races.

Sincerely yours,



R. P. Walker
General Secretary
Y.M.C.A. of Newark